

Healthy Americans Act Will Save Billions in Health Care Costs

Reps. Eshoo, Emerson, Cooper, Castle, Wasserman Schultz, and Harman Introduce Bill to Fix Broken U.S. Health Care System

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Washington, D.C. —Today, Reps. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), Jim Cooper (D-TN), Mike Castle (R-DE), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), and Jane Harman (D-CA) introduced the Healthy Americans Act (H.R. 1321), legislation to provide affordable health care coverage for all Americans. Health care spending in the U.S. is increasing at a rate that is double that of inflation, with over two trillion dollars spent in 2008 alone.

The Healthy Americans Act ensures that every American will be able to afford quality, private health insurance. It gives Americans a choice in where they get their care. It makes health care portable, so a job loss doesn't mean the loss of health insurance. It promotes prevention and wellness, and reforms the insurance market so that insurers are forced to compete on price, benefits, and quality. All this has been scored by the Congressional Budget Office to be budget neutral by 2014.

"The Healthy Americans Act will create a comprehensive health care plan that will cover every American for less than we spend on health care today," said Eshoo. "In a country as wealthy in research, talent, and resources as the United States, it's unacceptable that our health care system ranks dead last among other major industrialized nations for quality, access, and efficiency."

"The Healthy Americans Act is a bipartisan indication that we are taking the issue of health care reform seriously in Congress. The model of health insurance coverage in place isn't working for millions of American families. We obviously need reform, and I think this legislation includes the good ideas that ought to at least inform a meaningful debate in which every member of Congress should participate. We all represent Americans who lack health insurance, and we all bear the obligation to improve the system," said Emerson.

"Record numbers of Americans are finding themselves out of work this year, which means they're finding themselves out of health care too," said Cooper. "You couldn't have a clearer wake-up call: we need to reform our antiquated health care system so all Americans have affordable coverage. The Healthy Americans Act is bipartisan, it saves us money and it lets every American choose a plan with the same level of benefits I get as a member of Congress. Americans can't wait for us to study the issue any longer. We should build off of this consensus bill and pass health reform now."

"By providing coverage for all Americans with market-driven health care choices like those that members of Congress have today, HAA is a starting point for the debate on how best to reform a crumbling system," said Castle. "The bipartisan and bicameral support for HAA signals a commitment to prioritizing reform that ensures better access and

quality in our health care system, improves individuals' health, and lowers U.S. health care costs."

"It's estimated that thousands of Americans die every year because millions of people don't have health insurance," said Wasserman Schultz. "This landmark legislation guarantees affordable, private health care for all Americans, saving not only money, but lives."

"As the daughter and sister of medical doctors, I've seen the best and worst of the US healthcare system. Now, as more Americans are losing their jobs and forced to cut essential expenses, the moment couldn't be riper for universal coverage that is both comprehensive and affordable," said Harman. "I look forward to working with my congressional colleagues and the Obama Administration on finally getting this right."

The Healthy Americans Act will pay for itself by eliminating administrative costs and reforming an outdated tax code that gives businesses write offs for even the most expensive health plans. Individuals and families will get a tax credit to purchase insurance and will be provided subsidies so that all Americans can afford coverage, regardless of their income.

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